

An acquaintance recently expressed his dislike of musicals. “If you have something to say, just say it,” he intoned (pun intended). Imagine how much more emphatic he would be if commenting on opera!

But even those who dislike musicals and opera will acknowledge that poetry and music are powerful ways to deliver a message. More accurately, they CAN be powerful—when presented properly. It is music that heightens the level of suspense and deepens the feelings of romance in movies. Even then, the music must be performed with attention given to dynamics, including volume and tempo, to create the desired effect and response.

A classic example of such impact is Ravel’s “Bolero.” Add some culture to your day and dedicate 17 minutes to listen to it (<http://youtu.be/mhhkGyJ092E>). The recurring theme of the one-movement orchestral piece performed as a continuing crescendo by various instruments, first as solos and then as an entire orchestra, would be boring if not for the dynamics. The rhythmic variations, staccato accents and building intensity of the percussion make it a classic that has touched the soul.

Each person is affected uniquely by works of art, such as music. But the point remains that music that touches the heart is much more than giving sound to notes printed on a page. Music touches the heart when it is performed with feeling and meaning.

Imagine how it would sound if someone played each note perfectly, but absent the dynamics. It would be like the first year piano student who is doing well to merely play the right notes. As the musician lives with the music and understands the composer’s heart the dynamics become an integral part of the performance. It’s when the notes are channeled through the heart to the fingers or voice that music has its power to move listeners. Music is to be felt as much as heard.

This relates to the reading of Scripture. The message of the Bible is to be felt as much as heard. It is to affect the heart as well as the mind, the emotions as well as the intellect. It will succeed in reaching both the mind and the heart as we give as much diligence to living with and practicing the

reading of Scripture as the musician devotes to living with and practicing the musical score. Just as a good musician is not satisfied to merely get the notes right, but to interpret them in the context of the entire score, so the good reader of Scripture will not be satisfied to merely sound out the words, but to communicate the meaning of the words in the context of phrases and paragraphs.

A musician gives attention to phrasing. So must the reader of Scripture. A musician employs various means of expression to communicate the message and the emotion of a song. In a similar way, the one reading Scripture should pay attention to punctuation, pausing where appropriate, and to the context, so as to give proper emphasis to certain words. The printed Bible is the Word of God. We should revere it as such.

The one who is charged with reading Scripture publicly should display understanding of the responsibility to give proper emphasis so that the message is delivered clearly and effectively. Included in the responsibility of reading the Bible is voice inflection, appropriate volume and clear diction. Effort and practice should go into the preparation for reading Scripture. That preparation should include the following considerations and disciplines.

1. Read the selected passage in its context. Get into the gist of the entire passage, not just the section you plan to read.
2. Imagine how the writer would read it and practice mimicking him.
3. Read various translations of the passage to gain a better understanding of the message being conveyed. The various ways of expressing the thought will give you insight into the meaning. You might even combine translations, creating a composite of two or three so as to best communicate the thought.
4. Practice reading the passage aloud many times so as to master the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar or difficult words. Stand in front of a mirror while doing this.
5. Hold your Bible up so that you are able to make eye contact with the audience just over the top of the page. This will allow you to maintain good eye

contact with your audience without losing your place when glancing down at your Bible.

6. Become so familiar with the text (the words and the meaning) that you can communicate the message without it sounding like you are reading to people. How effective Scripture reading would be if those listening could imagine that the writer himself is actually speaking to them!
7. Employ the voice inflection of the writer, pausing where he would and emphasizing words and phrases he would stress.
8. Above all, read Scripture as though you are reading the very words of God. Because you ARE!

Read for effect. The Bible message is meant to change people.

Dynamic reading will inspire hope and resolve. It will console the grieving, energize the weary,

strengthen the weak, encourage the downcast, confirm the committed, convict the sinner and reassure the righteous.

You have not fulfilled your mission of reading the Scriptures when you successfully read the words, accurately pronouncing every word. You have fulfilled your mission only when you have, to the best of your ability, read the words as the inspired writer would have read them.

Read clearly so that the ears of your audience can understand. Read slowly enough that their minds can process and digest them. Read loudly enough that the person on the back row can hear, even without the benefit of amplification. Read sincerely so that the hearers know you have been impacted by God's words. Read with conviction and compassion, earnestly yet tenderly.

